

Message Text

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53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-05

CCO-00 OMB-01 SCCT-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 ORM-02

DHA-02 /100 W

----- 106936

O 301425Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8418

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA ASPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0994

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJ: TRUCE STILL HOLDS BUT POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES INCREASE

REF: BIERUT 957 (1414Z)

1. TENSIONS AND EXCHANGES OF FIRE (WHICH ARE CONTINUING JAN 30) BETWEEN SHIYAH AND AIN RUMMANEH ARE BLACK MARK IN OTHERWISE QUIET SECURITY PICTURE. SMALL NUMBER OF BOMBINGS AND LOOTING CONTINUE IN PARTS OF BEIRUT, WE HAVE CONFIRMATION OF LARGESCALE MOVEMENT OF SHIITE FAMILIES FROM NABA DISTRICT (EAST OF BEIRUT RIVER) NOW THAT ROUTES INTO WEST BEIRUT ARE OPEN. IT NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THESE PERSONS ARE RETURNING TO VILLAGES IN SOUTH OF COUNTRY(AS DID EARLIER WASVE OF SHIITE REFUGEES FROM SHIYAH) OR SETTLING IN WEST BEIRUT, WHERE THEY COULD ADD TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC FERMENT ALREADY OCCASIONED BY MOSLEM REFUGEES FROM QARANTINA AND ELSE WHERE. ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY,THERE APPEARS TO BE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF FLYING ROADBLOCKS AND OTHER OBSTRUCTIONS HINDERING USE OF TRIPOLI-BEIRUT ROAD. OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT PRIMARY PROBLEM AREA IS IN KOURA, JUST SOUTH OF PRIPOLI.

2. CARLOS KHOURY, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PRESIDENCY, TOLD EMBOFF JAN 30 THAT PRES FRANGIE WILL PROBABLY JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS NEXT TUESDAY OR WEDNESDAY. PRESS CONTINUES TO SPECULATE ON TIMING, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF GEN. NAJI JAMIL'S RETURN TO BEIRUT FROM BRIEF SOJOURN IN SYRIA. DAILY CONFIDENTIAL

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"AL BAYRAQ," WHICH HAS LINKS WITH PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, REPORTS THAT JAMIL CARRIED PERSONAL MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY FROM PRES ASAD TO FRANGIE. IT DIFFICULT TO BE CERTAIN OF REASONS BEHIND SLIPPAGE OF FRANGIE TRIP, BUT KHOURY IMPLIED THAT PALESTINIAN ASPECTS OF POLITICAL SOLUTION STILL HAS NOT BEEN TIED UP WITH NEAT, RED BOW. THIS MAY EXPLAIN OCCASION SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM SEIZED AFGER JAN 29 MEETING WITH PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE PROGRESSIVE LEADERS TO

EMPHASIZE PUBLICLY SYRIA'S COMMITMENT TO GUARANTEE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT REGULATING THE PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN LEBANON.

3. WHATEVER THE JUSTIFICATION FOR DELAYING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, THE FACT OF DELAY IS RAISING POSSIBILITY THAT ACCORD MAY BECOME UNRAVELLED BEFORE IT IS FULLY WOVEN. LEBANESE MOSLEM LEADERS (SUNNI MUFTI, SHIITE IMAM MUSA AS SADR, DRUZE SHEIKH AL AQL, KARAME, SAEB SALAM, ABDULLAH YAFI, AND KAAAL JUMBLATT) WILL GATHER JAN 30 AT MUFTI'S ARAMOUN RESIDENCE TO DISCUSS CURRENT SITUATION. AMONG MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED IS QUESTION OF WHETHER MARONITE CHRISTIAN OCCUPANCY OF THE PRESIDENCY SHOULD BE WRITTEN IN THE CONSTITUTION. SALAM HAS ALREADY COME OUT PUBLICLY AGAINST THIS MEASURE, AND WE MAY BE WITNESSING THE FIRST NIBBLING AROUND THE EDGES OF WHAT WE TAKE TO BE ESSENTIALLY CONCLUDED DEAL. NOR IS SNIPING, ONCE BEGUN, LIKELY TO BE CONFINED TO MOSLEMS AND PROGRESSIVES ALONE. RELIABLE SOURCE QUOTED KARIM PAKRADOUNI OF PHALANGE POLITBURO TO EMBOFF AS SAYING JAN 29 THAT POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT NOW WOULD ACHIEVE LITTLE MORE THAN "ARMED TRUCE" BETWEEN WARRING FACTIONS BETWEEN NOW AND SEPT 1976 (DATE FOR NEW PRESIDENT TO ASSUME OFFICE). WITHOUT INDICATING HIS PERSONAL VIEW OF CHRISTIAN STRATEGY, PAKRADOUNI IMPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DELAY GIVING SUBSTANCE TO ANY CHRISTIAN CONCESSION UNTIL THAT TIME. MARONITE LEADERS WILL FOREGATHER AT KASLIK JAN 31 TO GET THEIR LIKES IN.

4. PRI MIN KARAME AND GOL SEEM INTENT MEANTIME ON PUTTING HUMPTY-DUMPTY OF LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES BACK TOGETHER AGAIN. KARAME, FOLLOWING JAN 30 SESSION OFFICIALS, ISSUED APPEAL TO DESSERTERS AMONG ARMY AND INTERANL SECURITY FORCES (ISF) TO RETURN TO THE FOLD BY MON-
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DAY, FEB 2, UNDER GENERAL AMNESTY. CASE OF LT. AHMED KHATIB (REFTEL) HAS BECOME CAUSE CELEBRE IN MOSLEM AND PROGRESSIVE CIRCLES AND HIS FATE WILL REPORTEDLY BE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION IN 'ARAMOUN CONCLAVE TODAY. IT IS NOT PRESENTLY CLEAR WHO HAS CUSTODY OF KHATIB, SINCE YESTERDAY'S REPORT THAT HE WAS IN SYRIAN HANDS HAS BEEN DENIED. IT APPEARS INCREASINGLY PROBABLE, HOWEVER, THAT HIS CASE WILL BE SWEEPED UNDER THE RUG IN VIEW OF URGENCY OF RECONSTITUTING CREDIBLE ARMY FORCE TO HELP POLICE CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS.

5. FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, SLATED FOR NEXT AUGUST, IS INCREASINGLY MAKING ITS WAY INTO CONVERSATION AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS. JUMBLATT, WHO HAS CONTINUED HIS PUBLIC ATTACKS ON FRANGIE, IS NOW ACCUSING HIM OF SEEKING, WITH IMPLIED SYRIAN COLLUSION, TO TURN POST OVER

TO "RELATIVE" (READ LUCIEN DAHDAH). WE ANTICIPATE THAT JUMBLATT AND OTHERS WILL INTRODUCE QUESTION OF ALLEGED "BARGAINING" OVER PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION INTO 'ARAMOUN TALKS TODAY. EMBOFF IS RECEIVING GROWING NUMBER OF REPORTS OF MOSLEM SUSPICIONS THAT DAMASCUS MAY BE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH SUCH A DEAL, WITH REMINDER THAT PRES ASAD'S BROTHER, RIFAAT, IS "BUSINESS" PARTNER OF PRES FRANGIE'S SON, TONY. PAKRADOUNI, MEANWHILE, HAS IMPLIED THAT PHALANGE BELIEVE THAT CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR, ELIAS SARKIS (CHEHABIST CANDIDATE AGAINST FRANGIE IN 1970), IS DESIREABLE REPLACEMENT FOR FRANGIE. MOST SOURCES AGREE THAT RAYMOND EDDE, DESPITE (AND POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF) HIS STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM EXPOSURE FROM ABROAD, HAS LOST GROUND IN HIS RACE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. ONE THING AT LEAST, HOWEVER, IS CLEAR; LEBANESE POLITICOS HAVE RETURNED TO "BUSINESS AS USUAL" ALMOST BEFORE THE LAST GUN HAS FALLEN SILENT. THE DANGER IS THAT, IN THEIR HASTE, THEY MAY OVERLOOK THE NEED TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE GUNS STAY SILENT.

LAMBRAKIS

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